

TAMPEREEN YLIOPISTO

**Finnish Teachers' Attitudes to Muslim Students and
Muslim Student Integration**

Kasvatustieteiden yksikkö

Kasvatustieteiden pro gradu -tutkielma

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Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli tarkastella suomalaisten opettajien asenteita muslimioppilaita ja muslimioppilaiden integraatiota kohtaan. Muslimioppilaiden koulutuksellisista tarpeista on kasvaneen maahanmuuton myötä läntisissä yhteiskunnissa käyty paljon keskustelua, ja pohdinnan kohteena on usein se, miten näiden oppilaiden integroitumista yhteiskuntaan voidaan tukea. Kouluyhteisöillä on keskeinen rooli integraation tukemisessa, mutta opettajien asenteita näitä asioita kohtaan on tutkittu vain vähän.

Tässä tutkimuksessa kartoitettiin suomalaisten opettajien ja opettajaopiskelijoiden (N=864) asenteita muslimioppilaita ja heidän integroitumisensa tukemista kohtaan määrällisen kyselyaineiston avulla. Tutkimuskysymykset olivat: 1) Minkälaisia ovat suomalaisten opettajien asenteet muslimioppilaita ja muslimioppilaiden integraatiota kohtaan? 2) Löytyykö eroavaisuuksia a) opettajaopiskelijoiden asenteissa liittyen siihen, ovatko he aiemmin olleet tekemisissä muslimien kanssa? b) opettajien asenteissa liittyen muslimioppilaiden määrään heidän opettamiensa oppilaiden joukossa? 3) Eroavatko a) mies- ja naisopettajien b) opettajaopiskelijoiden ja ammattiaan jo harjoittavien opettajien c) eri kouluasteilla toimivien opettajien asenteet toisistaan?

Tutkimuksen aineisto kerättiin vuoden 2011 aikana. Tutkimuksessa käytettiin alun perin Tanskassa kehitettyä kyselylomaketta "Teacher Attitudes Toward Muslim Student Integration". Opettajat ja opettajaopiskelijat vastasivat internetissä tähän kyselylomakkeeseen, jossa oli 21 väittämää Likertin asteikolla 1-6 liittyen muslimioppilaisiin, heidän mahdollisuuksiinsa integroitua sekä siihen, miten kouluissa integraatiota tuetaan. Analyysimenetelminä käytettiin exploratiivista faktorianalyysia, t-testejä sekä yksisuuntaista varianssianalyysia (ANOVA).

Faktorianalyysin avulla löydettiin neljä ulottuvuutta: M1 oppilaiden täytyy oppia demokraattisia arvoja; M2 maahanmuuttajamuslimioppilaat tulevat integroitumaan yhteiskuntaan; M3 oppilaiden täytyy oppia toisista uskonnoista; M4 opettajat edistävät suvaitsevaisuutta ja integraatiota. Opettajat pitivät erittäin tärkeänä, että oppilaat oppivat demokraattisia arvoja, ja suhtautuivat positiivisesti myös toisista uskonnoista oppimiseen. Erilaisuuden käsittelyä ja kohtaamista ei pidetty yhtä tärkeänä kuin yhteisistä arvoista opettamista, ja Islamista opettamiseen opettajat suhtautuivat negatiivisemmin kuin yleisesti erilaisuudesta opettamiseen.

Aiempi kokemus toisista kulttuureista ja muslimeista ennusti positiivisempia asenteita opettajaopiskelijoilla. Muslimioppilaiden määrällä luokkahuoneessa ei tässä tutkimuksessa näyttänyt olevan merkitystä opettajien asenteisiin. Naisopettajat ja ammattiaan jo harjoittavat opettajat olivat vahvemmin orientoituneita yhteisistä arvoista opettamiseen kuin muut opettajat. Toisella asteella opettavat opettajat suhtautuivat positiivisemmin muslimioppilaiden mahdollisuuteen integroitua kuin varhaiskasvattajat ja luokanopettajat. Nämä tulokset osittain

vahvistavat, osittain kyseenalaistavat aiempien tutkimusten tuloksia ja osoittavat tarpeen jatkaa aihepiirin tutkimusta erilaisissa konteksteissa.

Avainsanat: islam, muslimit, integraatio, opettajat, asenteet, koulu, kvantitatiivinen tutkimus

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1 Introduction

Muslim culture is often considered an obstacle to integration, and Muslims have become “the critical case of multiculturalism” in many liberal societies (Modood 2011). The education of Muslim students in countries with a strong history of Muslim immigration has been a much discussed issue, and there have been debates concerning the ways in which the educational needs of Muslims should be met (see Ipgrave 2010). The focus has often been on the challenges of taking in account the values and beliefs of Muslim students in school practices. Studies have examined this issue in relation to the teaching of music (Harris 2002), physical education (Tansin, Dagkasa & Jawada 2011) and sex education (Halstead 1997). Furthermore, issues related to biases in the curriculum and teaching, students’ experiences of Islamophobia and racism, and the difficulties in the relationships between schools and Muslim families have all been examined, and possible ways of overcoming these difficulties have been suggested (Parker-Jenkins 1991, Bigelow 2008, Zine 2001).

Despite these studies, there is little research concerning teachers’ attitudes toward Muslim students and the promotion of integration in schools. Most studies concerned with teachers’ attitudes to and ways of dealing with diversity are qualitative case studies (see, for example, Zine 2001); it is very difficult to find large-scale quantitative studies that give more generalizable information about teachers’ attitudes to student diversity. Furthermore, while issues related to educating Muslims in the West have been discussed at the academic level to some extent, studies related to multicultural education and the ability of teachers to deal with diversity rarely focus on religious diversity. Instead, they tend to focus on cultural, racial and ethnic forms of diversity. The distinct challenges of dealing with religious difference and the prejudice related to religion should also be recognized and dealt with (Rissanen 2012, Subedi 2006). For many Muslim students, the salience of religious identity is high; it is emphasized over other factors, such as ethnic identity (Jacobson 1997, Peek 2005, Jozsa 2009). There is also empirical evidence that religion is an important indicator in an individual’s educational performance, and immigrant pupils from Islamic countries perform worse than other immigrant students. These differences are not explained by socio-economic background, the characteristics of the school, or the education system; a possible mediator could be the attitudes of teachers toward students of the Islamic faith (Dronkers & Fleischman 2010, Dronkers & van der Velden 2013). Therefore, if a researcher’s focus is on matters of ethnic, cultural and racial identity/discrimination, special challenges related to the integration of students with strong religious identities can be left unnoticed.

Teachers' attitudes toward Muslim students have previously been investigated by Agirdag, Loobuyck & Van Houtte (2012) in Belgium. They found that the teachers' gender, age, religious background and educational level, as well as the number of Muslims in their schools, were significant determinants of teachers' attitudes. However, more research in various contexts is needed in order to increase understanding of teachers' attitudes toward Muslim students and the way in which involvement with Muslims affects these attitudes. We investigated teachers' attitudes to Muslim students and Muslim student integration by using the same survey instrument as Agirdag, Loobuyck & Van Houtte (2012). Our survey was answered by 864 Finnish practicing and pre-service teachers.

Our research questions were:

- 1) What are the attitudes of Finnish teachers to Muslim students and Muslim student integration?
- 2) Are there any differences in the attitudes of
 - a) pre-service teachers who have had previous experience with other cultures and with Muslims?
 - b) practicing teachers in relation to the number of Muslim students in their school and among the students they teach?
- 3) Are there differences in attitude based on
 - a) the teacher's gender?
 - b) the teacher's classroom experience?
 - c) the grade level being taught?

The results of our study are published in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (Rissanen, Kuusisto & Tirri, in press). In the following chapters, the theoretical background of the study will be elaborated in a more thorough manner and discussion on the results of the study extended.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Educating Muslims in the West

Muslims often have to make the choice of whether to let their children to be educated according to liberal principles that are sometimes considered incompatible with Islamic ideals of knowledge, or to isolate themselves and not be able to be considered as full citizens (Halstead 2004). However, it is also important to notice that the responses of Muslims to modernity vary, and their willingness to integrate in Western societies and strategies to do this are very different (AlSayyad 2002, Ahmed 1992, Niyozov 2010, Daun & Walford 2004). In any case, some Muslim parents in Western contexts have strong suspicions toward school. These suspicions might be difficult to overcome because Muslims are rarely represented in the school staff, parental associations or among educational authorities in European schools (Maréchal 2002). The failures of integrating Muslims in public schools – together with feelings that Islam and Muslims not being appropriately recognized – have in part resulted in the willingness to found Islamic schools in, for example, Britain (McCreery et al. 2007, Ipgrave 2010), the Netherlands (Niehaus 2009) and the Nordic countries (Larsson 2009, Leirvik 2009, Kuyucoglu 2009).

The West also harbors strong suspicions and critical attitudes toward Islamic education. The fact that Muslims want their own education in Europe invokes suspicions among non-Muslims: Islamic education in the West has even been accused of being a possible cause for Islamic radicalism and terrorism (Douglass & Shaikh 2004, Bartels 2000). These arguments are not necessarily based on any kind of evidence: in the Netherlands, for example, Islamic schools are constantly accused of hindering the integration of Muslim students into Dutch society although research results do not confirm this (Meijer 2009, 24). Furthermore, even in countries with many Muslim schools, such as in Britain and the Netherlands, most Muslim students are still educated at public schools (Niehaus 2009). Even though those opposing the founding of Islamic schools often argue that the best way to promote integration is not to have separate schools for Muslims, there is little research on how integration is promoted in public schools.

Attention has also been paid to the low academic achievement of immigrant Muslim students. Often the gap in achievement between native and immigrant students is explained by socio-economic status and difficulties related to the need to adapt to the new culture and language, since second generation students tend to achieve better. However, these factors do not seem to completely explain the disparities (see, for example, Azzolini, Schnell & Palmer 2012). Often the

strategies developed to fight against the educational disadvantages of Muslim students include recognition and appraisal of their religion and culture and increasing these students' dignity and feeling of belonging (Ipgrave 2010). Agirdag, Houtte & Van Avermaet (2011) present empirical evidence of teacher-pupil relationships having a great importance for ethnic minority students' self-esteem, which in turn could affect the students' academic performance. However, teachers do not always understand the significance of their role in helping immigrant students to achieve more academically (Talib 1999). An information and guidance document for schools released by Muslim Council of Britain in 2007 states:

Recognition and inclusion of the faith identity and religious needs of Muslim pupils can contribute positively to their personal development and school life. Failure to recognise and affirm, or even worse the creation of situations involving conflicts of belief or conscience is likely to have an alienating effect where pupils may feel that they are not valued and may give rise to inappropriate assumptions that in order to progress in society they will have to compromise or give up aspects of who they are, and their religious beliefs and values. Unfortunately Muslim pupils are sometimes placed in situations where they feel pressured into acting contrary to their beliefs and conscience and also experience islamophobic sentiments and comments within schools. This can have a reciprocal effect on the child's considered opinion of the school and, indeed, education itself. (Muslim Council of Britain 2007)

Thus, religious affiliation provides the students with social, cultural and religious capital, which has been found to contribute positively to educational attainment of low-achieving groups, such as black boys (Byfield 2008). According to Ipgrave (2010), who refers to studies of Choudry (2004) and Richardson and Wood (2004), there is already evidence in support of the fact that if the religious identities of Muslim students are recognized and accepted in schools, better academic achievement results. However, when multiculturalism in schools is taken to mean an extensive focus on recognizing and giving space for different cultures and religions, sometimes too little attention is paid to aspects of integration and commonality – schools should also be able to support the development of a shared national identity and commitment to common values (Ipgrave 2010). In this study, we used the research instrument “Teacher Attitudes toward Muslim Student Integration”, which pays attention to the aspects of teacher's willingness to deal with different religions in schools as well as their willingness to promote common values.

2.2 Scrutinizing teachers' abilities to deal with different cultures and religions

In the research literature, teachers of Muslim students in Western contexts are often accused of insensitivity toward Islam and Muslims, and of lacking knowledge; this ignorance manifests itself in racist attitudes, Islamophobia, Eurocentricism and low expectations of Muslim students (see, for example, Abukhattala 2004, Abbas 2005, Zine 2001, McCreery et al. 2007). However, there are also those who consider this research literature – although succeeding in increasing the sensitivity toward Islam – as polemic, one-sided and missing the voice of teachers, since it focuses mainly on the perspectives of the students and their parents. Some of the critical studies are accused of causing the reverse stereotyping of public school teachers, presenting them as incapable of dealing with Muslim students. Teachers in Islamic schools, however, seem to escape this critical gaze. It is not always correct to assume that Muslim teachers are better teachers for Muslim students than non-Muslim teachers: there are Muslim students who prefer to have non-Muslim teachers because they feel better treated. Furthermore, the stereotyping of public schools and their teachers as racist and insensitive toward issues of Muslims probably increases the suspicions in the Muslim community and strengthens the willingness of Muslim parents to send their children to Muslim schools (Niyozov & Pluim 2009, Niyozov 2010).

Teachers' attitudes and the way in which Muslims are recognized in Western schools are also affected by political agendas. In Britain, for example, schoolteachers are increasingly given tasks related to the prevention of violent extremism, and the government has endeavored to provide teachers with tools and education that could help them in identifying and supporting those students who are at risk of getting involved with groups and ideas related to violent extremism (see DCSF 2008). However, this kind of initiative is also criticized for increasing mutual suspicions in society and making the position of Muslim students in schools even more difficult (Ipgrave 2010). Nevertheless, many teachers acknowledge and want to fight the existence of racism and different biases found in the school community and the contents of teaching. Furthermore, racist attitudes are not the sole property of teachers and students of Western origin; the existence of mutual suspicions should be acknowledged. Nevertheless, teachers are aware of the criticism readily leveled at their profession, so fears of being labeled racist may prevent them from taking risks and problematizing teaching content (Niyozov 2010, Niyozov & Pluim 2009).

Altogether, the need to improve teachers' abilities to work in multicultural schools and to meet the needs of students from different backgrounds has been acknowledged, and courses on multicultural education have become common in teacher education programs. Different ways of

preparing pre-service teachers for teaching in multicultural contexts have also been studied (for an overview, see Sleeter 2001). However, what kind of contents these courses should have and what kind of issues should be dealt with is not at all clear (Garmon 2004). There are teacher education programs, such as Justice-Oriented Teacher Education and Culturally Responsive Teaching, for example, that endeavor to educate teachers who fight against educational inequalities by having equally high expectations for all students, paying attention to their students' cultural backgrounds, and drawing from these cultures in their teaching, as well as acting as critical agents of change in their school and in society (Whipp 2013). The research results concerning the effectiveness of different kinds of courses on multicultural education, however, do not have very clear implications, and there is no consensus on how changes in the student teachers' attitudes could be achieved (Garmon 2004).

Nevertheless, studies of both pre-service and practicing teachers have noted the importance of cross-cultural experiences and extensive field experiences in developing positive attitudes toward diverse student populations and culturally responsive ways of teaching (Pohan 1996, Garmon 2004, Smith, Moallem & Sherrill 1997, Ladson-Billings 2009). Support-group and educational experiences seem to count, too: opportunities to reflect and mediate learning experiences related to encountering diversity have been found to have an important influence on the development of attitudes (Garmon 2004; Whipp 2013, Causey, Thomas & Armento 2000), and on helping teachers to develop awareness of their own identities and empathize with people living different lives (Adams, Bondy & Kuhel 2005). On the other hand, there is evidence that previous experiences and attitudes related to diversity function as a filter for learning, meaning that negative attitudes are very difficult to change through courses on multicultural education. Overall, pre-service teachers' beliefs and assumptions about other people have proved to be very difficult to change (Garmon 1996, Causey, Thomas & Armento 2000). Furthermore, some personal dispositions and character traits, such as openness, self-awareness/self-reflectiveness and commitment to social justice, also serve as indicators for responding positively to this kind of education (Garmon 2004).

The above-mentioned studies tend to focus on the development of the ways teachers deal with ethnic, cultural and racial forms of diversity. However, even teachers who express positive attitudes toward diversity in general might have difficulties in dealing with students with a strong Islamic faith. Common modern and post-modern liberal ideals of tolerance are not always well suited for dealing with "deep forms of difference", such as a strong Muslim identity: this is why in questions concerning multiculturalism, Muslims have become the "critical case" in many

liberal societies (Modood 2011, Rissanen 2012). Empirical evidence of Islamic faith being an indicator of low educational performance supports the assumption that teachers have difficulties in dealing with this form of difference (Dronkers & Fleischman 2010, Dronkers & van der Velden 2013). For this reason, we considered it important to study teachers' attitudes toward Muslim students in particular. The education of Muslim students in Finnish schools has received little academic attention. One study focused on the schooling of Somali youth in Helsinki (Alitolppa-Niitamo 2004), and other studies have dealt with the education of immigrant students in Finland (Kilpi-Jakonen 2011, 2012; Liebkind, Jasinskaja-Lahti & Solheim 2004) and multicultural education in general (see, for example, Lappalainen 2006, Holm & Londen 2010, Dervin et al. 2012, Jokikokko 2005). Even though Finnish teachers recognize the existence of many kinds of diversity in educational contexts, religious minorities are among the most poorly recognized forms of diversity. Many teachers also think that the atmosphere and attitudes in Finnish schools are still characterized by a dominant monoculturalism (Jokikokko 2005). One dissertation has examined Finnish teachers' beliefs and attitudes related to immigrant students and teachers' self-reported abilities to teach immigrants (Talib 1999). This study discovered that only quite a small minority of teachers were oriented to a multicultural education that emphasizes the acceptance of difference and social democracy. Many teachers reported that they had a multicultural orientation, but for most of them, this meant seeing difference as a deficiency that could be fixed by, for example, special education. It therefore seems that in many teachers' conceptions, Finnish culture represents the normality against which difference is mirrored and evaluated (Talib 1999, Jokikokko 2005).

In spite of these findings, caring and equality can be seen as the core values and an essential part of the ethos of Finnish educational policy, and many Finnish teachers have a strong ethical orientation (Tirri & Kuusisto 2013, Kuusisto, Tirri & Rissanen 2012, Jokikokko 2005). In our previous study, we found that Finnish teachers have a high level of (self-estimated) ethical sensitivity (Kuusisto, Tirri & Rissanen 2012). In the present study, our aim was to investigate what kind of attitudes these same teachers have toward Muslim students and the promotion of their integration in schools.

3. Data, methods and participants

We collected a nonprobability sample ($N = 864$) with a survey instrument “Teacher Attitudes Toward Muslim Student Integration”. This instrument was originally designed and pilot-tested in Denmark in 2006 from the basis of responses from interviews with an Imam, teachers, headmasters and professors in both public schools and independent Muslim schools in two Danish cities. Data has been gathered with this survey instrument from Denmark, Norway, Belarus, Belgium and Austria (Sharpes et al. 2010). We double-blind translated this instrument into Finnish. The Finnish data was collected during the spring and autumn semesters of 2011. Each respondent was personally invited to complete the Internet version of the questionnaire. The participants were asked to evaluate 16 statements related to Muslim students, their integration to society and the promotion of integration in schools on a 7 point Likert scale (1 very strongly disagree, 2 strongly disagree, 3 disagree, 4 neither agree nor disagree, 5 agree, 6 strongly agree, 7 very strongly agree). We used exploratory factor analysis in detecting dimensions in the scale and forming coefficients. All the coefficients were not normally distributed, but the deviations from normal distribution were not massive. Thus, the data was analysed with t-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Of the teacher sample, 60 per cent were practicing teachers ($n = 522$) and 40 per cent were student teachers ($n = 342$) at the beginning of their pedagogical studies at the University of Helsinki. Altogether 667 (77%) of the teachers were female and 197 (23%) male. The sample consisted of current and future early education and elementary school class teachers ($n = 302$, 35%) as well as lower and upper secondary school subject teachers ($n = 562$, 65%). The latter were teachers of science ($n = 141$, 16%), social science (religion, history, philosophy, and psychology) ($n = 123$, 14%), languages ($n = 176$, 20%), and other subjects (e.g., art, home economics, crafts, and physical education) ($n = 122$, 22%). Most of the teachers ($n = 625$, 72%) belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, five percent ($n = 42$) were members of other religious affiliations with four Muslims. 23 percent ($N = 197$) of the teachers did not have membership to any religion. Eighty-nine percent of Finnish practicing teachers had Muslim students in their classes, though many ($n = 381$, 73%) had only ten percent or less. Only four percent ($n = 32$) have more than 50 percent of their classes composed of Muslim students.

4 Results

4.1 Finnish teachers are oriented to promoting common values, but their attitudes to Muslim students are less positive.

By using exploratory factor analysis, we found a four-factor model that we also used in analyzing differences in teacher attitudes related to previous involvement with Muslims, gender, career stage, and school level (Rissanen, Kuusisto & Tirri, 2014). We named the four dimensions as follows: *M1 Students need to learn democratic values*; *M2 Muslim immigrant students will integrate into society*; *M3 Students need to learn about different religions*; *M4 Teachers promote tolerance and integration*.

We found that teachers considered the teaching of common democratic values very important. They also had positive attitudes to teaching about different religions in school; however, dealing with diversity did not seem to be regarded as important as the promotion of common values. Even though Muslims are probably the most visible religious minority in Finland and there are good reasons for prioritizing teaching about Islam, teachers had more positive attitudes to teaching about diversity in general. This reflects a general negative attitude toward Islam and strengthens the assumption that Finnish teachers are more willing to deal with some forms of difference other than religious minorities (Jokikokko, 2005).

Furthermore, teachers' belief in Muslim students' likelihood of being integrated into Finnish society was not very strong. This noticeably weak belief indicates that the general attitude to Muslims is not very positive, reflecting a general tendency in Finnish society. These results also indicate that Finnish teachers might still be prone to promote uniformity rather than recognition and appreciation of diversity (see also Jokikokko, 2005; Talib, 1999). However, recognition and appraisal of Muslim immigrant students' religion and culture in school is essential in helping them to achieve better (Ipgrave, 2010), while offering space for their religious identities in school seems to promote a commitment to society (Rissanen, 2013). Thus, teachers' understanding of the complementary nature of promoting commitment to common values and recognizing religious diversity should be increased. However, we found some differences in teachers' attitudes based on their previous involvement with other cultures and with Muslims, as well as on the individual teacher's gender, career stage, and the school level being taught.

4.2 Previous involvement with Muslims indicates more positive teacher attitudes to students

Agirdag, Loobuyck, & Van Houtte (2102) have found that the number of Muslim students in a school affects teacher attitudes; the greater the number of Muslim students, the more negative are the teacher attitudes. On the other hand, cross-cultural experiences have been found to be important factors in developing teachers' positive attitudes to diversity (Garmon, 2004). Previous research literature has suggested the importance of cross-cultural experiences in developing pre-service teachers' attitudes to diversity. We therefore expected to find some differences in the attitudes of these teachers to Muslim students based on the teachers' previous involvement with different cultures. However, since we assumed that there are distinct challenges in developing teachers' attitudes to Muslim students, we examined constructively the effect of previous involvement with Muslims to determine if there was a different kind of impact. Furthermore, we examined differences in practicing teachers' attitudes in relation to the number of Muslim students in their schools and among the students they teach.

The results of our study are in accordance with previous studies that emphasize the importance of involvement with different cultures in developing positive attitudes to diversity. According to our results, previous involvement with other cultures is an indicator of student teachers' beliefs in the possibility of Muslim students to be integrated into society.

In many studies concerned with the development of student teacher attitudes, the importance of student support and reflective tasks along with experiences of encountering diversity are emphasized (Garmon, 2004; Whipp, 2013; Causey, Thomas & Armento, 2000). However, in our study, only previous involvement with other cultures indicated more positive attitudes. Furthermore, previous involvement with Muslims had a stronger impact on student teachers' attitudes to Muslim student integration than experience with other cultures in general. This strengthens the view that there are different challenges in dealing with distinct forms of differences and knowledge, and experience with particular forms of diversity is important in developing teachers' attitudes. Thus, where Muslims are a significant minority group, it is important that teachers are sufficiently familiar with the Islamic faith and culture. On the whole, religious diversity should be given more attention in discussions related to developing teachers' ability to deal with difference.

However, the attitudes of practicing teachers did not seem to be affected by the number of Muslim students in their school or among the students they teach. This result might be due to the generally small number of Muslim students in Finnish schools and classrooms. In fact, Muslims were a relatively small minority among the students of almost all the teachers in our data. This is why our

results are also in line with the study by Agirdag, Loobuyck, and Van Houtte (2012), who found the number of Muslim students in a school to have a negative effect on teacher attitudes only when the percentage of Muslim students exceeded 50. On the other hand, it has also been suggested that a small amount of experience actually increases teachers' stereotyping (Zeichner, 1996). This phenomenon did not appear in our study, since we did not find any difference between teachers with no experience of Muslim students and teachers with a little experience. Nevertheless, since the pre-service teachers' involvement with Muslims had such a significant effect on their attitudes, while practicing teachers' experiences of Muslim students did not seem to have any effect, the results related to student teachers could also be interpreted to indicate that pre-service teachers who originally had more positive attitudes to other cultures and to Muslims have also sought more contact with them. Furthermore, the number of Muslim students in schools and classrooms has probably not been decided by practicing teachers themselves, so in their case the direction of causality is easier to interpret. In any case, more research with careful consideration of the direction of causality is needed to determine how the involvement with different cultures and religions affects teachers' attitudes.

4.3 Female teachers are oriented to supporting students' personal development, but attitudes to Muslim students do not seem to be gender-related.

We also expected to find some differences between male and female teachers (Table 2). Talib (1999) found differences between Finnish male and female teachers' experiences with and attitudes to teaching immigrant students. In her study, females regarded teaching immigrant students as more enriching than did males and were more inclined to think that the students need an empathetic teacher willing to learn more about their cultural backgrounds and use modified methods of evaluation (Talib, 1999, 186-187). These results accord with the way in which the orientation of caring in teaching is often associated with female teachers, while expertise and authority evoke connotations of teaching as a male profession (see Kuusisto, Gholami, Schutte, Wolfsberger & Tirri, in this volume). Vogt (2010), however, has criticized the way in which caring has been understood only as a mothering activity, since it could also relate to a commitment to students and to developing professional relationships with them. In her study, both male and female primary school teachers were found to exhibit an ethic of caring. Rather than measuring the empathy in teacher attitudes, the survey instrument we used measures teachers' commitment to the promotion of student integration as well as teachers' willingness to promote cohesion in society through education. However, we expected to

find some gender-related difference, since male teachers have also been found to be more oriented to subject matter expertise (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000).

We found differences between male and female teachers' attitudes; for instance, female teachers considered it more important than males for students to learn about common democratic values as well as about difference (Table 2). In some respects, our results are in accordance with the findings of Agirdag, Loobuyck, & Van Houtte (2012) from Belgium. However, in the Belgian context, female teachers also had more positive attitudes to Muslim students and Muslim student integration than male teachers, while in Finland we did not find any gender-related differences in teachers' attitudes to Muslims. Even though attitudes to minorities have often been found to be gender related, in Finland this link seems to be weaker than elsewhere (see also Ketola, 2011b), which could be due to the generally more negative attitudes to religious minorities in Finland or to the relatively strong gender equality in Finnish culture. An examination of the links between gender and teacher attitudes in different contexts is needed to increase understanding of this interesting issue, as are studies using qualitative approaches.

Furthermore, it appears that teachers' general orientation to supporting integration by promoting commonality and teaching about diversity is a different thing from their attitudes to Muslim student integration, and the two things should be examined in separate studies. Even though females are more oriented to supporting the personal development of students, this does not mean that they also have more positive views of Muslim students and the possibilities of their becoming integrated into Finnish society. However, more research on the relatedness of these different aspects in teacher attitudes is needed. Overall, our results strengthen the perception that there are differences between male and female teachers' orientations (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000) and indicate that these differences also occur in dealing with diversity. Since the dimensions of our survey instrument measured teachers' attitudes to Muslim students and the promotion of their integration in schools rather than the degree of "motherly empathy" toward the students, our results can be regarded as evidence for the claim that there are also differences between males and females when the ethic of caring is understood more broadly.

4.4 Career stage predicts teachers' orientation to supporting students' personal development, while school level is an indicator of attitudes to Muslim students.

On the basis of what is known of the professional development of beginning teachers, we expected to find differences in attitudes between practicing teachers and student teachers. Previous studies have found that pre-service and novice teachers are more likely to be oriented to passing on content knowledge to their students, which is also something the teachers enjoy, while more experienced teachers focus more on interactions with students (Maskit, 2011, Tirri, 2011, 2012; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010; Ullvik, Smith & Helleve, 2009). Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt (2000), for example, found that beginning teachers see themselves mostly as experts in a subject rather than as didactic or pedagogical experts who take responsibility for students' personal development; however, this attitude changes during the careers of most teachers. The professional identity of teachers begins to form decisively when student teachers take their first jobs and have their own classes; during this phase of their careers, the content orientation often decreases (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011; Flores & Day, 2006; Lamote & Engels, 2010).

Thus, based on previous literature, we expected to find differences in the attitudes of student teachers and practicing teachers to the promotion of Muslim students' integration in schools, especially as the importance given to this promotion can be perceived as related to a pedagogical orientation that emphasizes support for students' personal development. As expected, we found practicing teachers to be more oriented toward the teaching of common values (Table 2). However, we found no differences between student teachers and practicing teachers with regard to their attitudes to Muslim students or their beliefs in Muslim students' likelihood of integrating into society.

Agirdag, Loobuyck, & Van Houtte (2012) found that, in a Belgian context, teaching at a more advanced school level predicted more negative teacher attitudes. We wanted to determine whether this is also the case in Finland. In Belgium, secondary school teachers have more negative attitudes to Muslim students than do teachers of elementary education. We found, however, that in the Finnish context this tendency is reversed: Elementary and early education teachers have the most negative attitudes to Muslim students and Muslim student integration. There is no simple explanation for this difference between the Finnish and the Belgian contexts, but the result emphasizes the need to continue researching this topic in different milieux. The teachers' grade level of teaching was the most important factor in explaining their conceptions of whether integration is being promoted in Finnish schools; early and elementary education teachers were the most likely to agree that it is. This finding provides further evidence that teachers' general orientation to supporting students' personal

development and educating students about diversity does not necessarily imply positive attitudes toward Muslims.

Furthermore, the fact that Finnish teachers at the more advanced levels are also less likely to believe that integration is being promoted in their schools could actually explain their more positive attitudes to Muslim students. For one thing, these teachers' emphasis is on subject matter. Moreover, there are fewer Muslim immigrant students at the more advanced educational levels, where students are expected to manage personal matters on their own. By contrast, at the lower levels teachers face more practical difficulties related to raising children from different cultures in close cooperation with their families. These difficulties often reveal problems and unresolved issues related to Muslim integration into Finnish schools and society. Thus, if the positive attitudes of Finnish upper-grade teachers simply indicate that these teachers do not take responsibility for supporting their students' integration processes and thus the teachers have more positive attitudes, then the implications of these research results are different. It is important to understand what lies behind these negative attitudes seen in Finnish early and elementary education teachers and why teachers' attitudes at the more advanced level are more positive. More research is needed on this subject.

5. Evaluation of the study

This study was motivated by the need to increase knowledge of teachers' attitudes to Muslim students and Muslim student integration. We wanted to participate in international discussions on the subject and enable international comparisons in the future. This was our motivation for using the originally Danish survey instrument "Teacher Attitudes toward Muslim Student Integration". However, we also encountered some problems when using this instrument. The items of the instrument seemed to be related to quite a wide range of issues – teachers' beliefs about Muslim students' possibilities of integrating, their experiences of whether integration is promoted in their schools, their attitudes to Muslims, their attitudes to teaching about common values, and their attitudes to teaching about differences. These issues could be, in some respect, grouped under the general title "teacher attitudes to Muslim student integration", but a more focused instrument could have led to more reliable results.

Some of the items of the instrument were also rather ambiguous and seemed not to measure attitudes (for example, m17, "Muslim immigrant students lack basic Finnish language skills") or asked respondents to evaluate statements related to politically complicated issues (for example, m20, "Finland should increase its Muslim immigrant community to satisfy the labor shortage"). Low ratings in these kinds of statements do not necessarily indicate negative attitudes to Muslims, but instead relate to more complex views on how to deal with societal issues. Thus, we had to exclude quite many of the instrument items from our analysis.

More interesting findings could have been achieved by adding more items designed on the basis of what we already know about teachers' attitudes and issues related to integration of Muslim students in Western schools and societies. However, one of the purposes of the study was to enable international comparison, because data is currently being gathered with this instrument in several other countries. We hope that discussion on the instrument will continue and it will be developed further. The survey instrument was designed on the basis of interviews in the Danish context, but it seems that more qualitative research on teachers' attitudes to Muslim students is needed in order to develop an instrument that would better take into account and measure the nuances and different aspects of teachers' attitudes to Muslim students and Muslim student integration. To discover the relevant issues related to promoting integration in schools, this kind of instrument should probably be based on a more advanced theoretical understanding of the concept of integration. It would have been worthwhile to discuss the instrument itself in the original article, but we must accept the fact that the journal that wanted to publish this study was more interested in the phenomenon we are examining rather than the instrument.

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